Published Articles of Chandramowly

DH Avenues

Wednesday, May 12, 2004

Leadership Competency Series

Emotional maturity to leadership

Emotional maturity is the ability to understand reality, facts and the quality of response to a situation by detaching from the pulls and pushes of pleasant and unpleasant feelings, says M R CHANDRAMOWLY.

THERE was a philosopher who was a businessman too. He was waiting for the safe arrival of large sailing ship carrying aboard his wife and children and all his wealth. On day, he heard a knock on his door and found a breathless messenger who announced: “Sir, your ship has sunk” “What?” “Your ship has sunk!” “So what?” “Sir, you have lost all your wealth” “What?” “You are a pauper” “So what?” “Sir, You have lost your wife and children” “What?” “You are an orphan” “So what?” Look at these two types of responses from the same person. The first response is an emotional “What” The second is cool, “So what?” The difference is obvious.

Swami Dayananda who narrates the story explains, when the businessman said “What” it is not that he had not understood what he was told and that he was asking for a clarification. The messenger had announced the news clearly. “What?” means “Oh, no! Not really!”, a response of non-acceptance of fact. An ordinary person will keep on building up on that non-acceptance seeing variety of associated things missing in a snap. “So what?” comes from emotional maturity accepting facts as they are. Maturity is not just meant for some chosen people like philosophers. It is the need of every one who would like to have right understanding. A right understanding makes a person matured.

Emotionally matured person sees the world as it is without distortion of perception. What really vitiates our perception to see the facts are our anxiety, insecurity, concern and fear. A non-performer is not problem of organisations. The problem is how a manager deals with him. If he looks at the fact and tackles the “performance” part there could be a solution. If he looks at the person who is the cousin of a director, the objective fact is veiled and emotions push towards a subjective choice. How many of us can say “So what?” and deal with the fact of nonperformance in the interest of bigger canvass of organisation. Emotional maturity is about understanding facts. No one can consciously try to get emotional. It happens. It takes us in its folds, if we neglect to take over it. Emotional maturity is a discipline of the mind ruled by intellect. Experience teaches us to face situations, influence to change some situations and to drop certain things.

Emotional maturity is the quality of our response to a situation. In a problem situation, a matured leader looks for facts. Once the facts are found whether we accept them or not depends on the maturity or immaturity of the mind.

Emotional Maturity

For an emotionally matured person, there is always a way out in any circumstances. A person, who is stuck with a conclusion that there is no way out, enslaves to external forces. Such people are prone to blowing up things and to commit suicide. Management life always has pleasant and unpleasant situations like any other arena. Most of our responses to unpleasant situations are reactive since we do not accept facts.

Emotionally matured leadership

If problems belong to some one else, we conduct with super maturity and we are great consultants. We display our maturity, the objective behaviour. What if the problems emerge in our own situation? A leader with emotional maturity takes in to account the situation, circumstances and all the facts. He is able to manage a tough situation since he sees what is happening. He is aware that, likes and dislikes, anger and attachment, fascination or frustration do not change the facts. We "get" angry, we "get" disturbed. If we do not hold on to the facts, emotion "gets" us. It also gets matured leaders but they come out of it quickly since their focus is on the facts and way out for solution. In that state of alacrity the misperceptions caused by emotions are unveiled and a leader is able to see the reality more clearly to determine correct course of actions. One needs to learn how to assemble puzzle pieces of facts constructing a nearly correct map. Making a fact map requires effort. The more effort a leader puts in a critical situation more accurate facts are made.

Improving emotional maturity

To grow, body must keep living with food and maintenance . The body grows. To grow a beard a man need not do anything. It grows. The external aspects don't require much of efforts. To develop a knowledge, to control emotions, to learn a skill one has to work them out. It is the outcome of introspection.

A painting may be an external object, but its creation is internal activity. Emotional maturity is an internal development of balancing the mind and intellect with the external reality.

A study at the Yale University School of Management found that, of all emotional signals, smiles are most contagious and they have irresistible power to make other smile in return. The greater a leader's skill at transmitting positive emotions, more forcefully the enthusiasm is transmitted. With that kind of talent they become emotional magnets.

Leaders high in emotional maturity are attuned to their inner signals and recognise how their emotions can affect them, others and the job performance. Emotionally matured leaders will have the stamina to resist emotions and stay calm in stressful situation and cannot be easily provoked. Their behaviours are non-impulsive and they resist temptation to inappropriate involvements. They are capable to find acceptable outlets for emotions. They understand conflicting views of others and express their opinion based on facts with openness and concern for overall effect.

Measurement scale

The dimensions of leadership competencies are measured at different levels for the convenience of identifying current level of a person and desired level for a job. Emotional maturity can be measured on a scale of -1 to 6 with behaviour descriptors for each level.

Emotional Maturity

At (-1) level, a person loses control. Own emotions interfere with work effectiveness. Frustration, feeling and negative emotions are expressed inappropriately. Emotional break out and incorrect personal involvement with subordinates, peers or customers is visible in this level.

At level (0), a person avoids stress by staying away from situations that provoke negative emotions. In level (1) a person resists the temptation to engage in incorrect emotional involvement or impulsive behaviour.

Emotions are controlled in Level (2). Though strong emotions such as anger, extreme frustration are felt, the emotions are restricted but constructive action is not taken.

At level (3), the same state is expressed but a person after emotional control continues discussion or the situation fairly and calmly.

Emotions are managed effectively at level (4). Emotional control methods are used to prevent burnout and a person successfully deals with ongoing stresses effectively.

A leader responds constructively at level (5) where he controls strong emotions and takes action to respond constructively to the source of the problems.

At level (6) a leader displays high level of emotional maturity. He controls his own emotions and calms other also.

There is an emotional current alive within us. It may be energising the whole of our being or only flickering minimally to one degree or another. Accurate knowledge of this internal drive brings confidence and it prepares a leader to manage tough situations successfully. An emotionally matured leader considers six basic emotional necessities in every person: need for affection, security, creative expression, recognition, new experiences and self-esteem. Human values such as steadiness, consistence, openness, righteousness, love for truth, positive attitude support to build emotional maturity.

Emotional Maturity